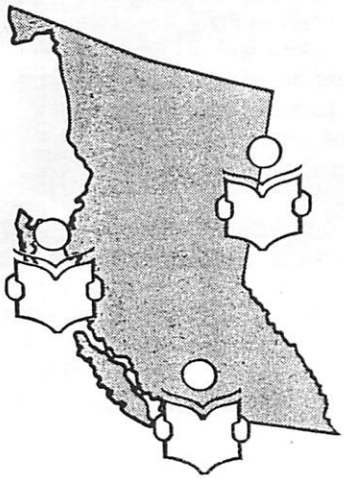

Literacy BC Founding Meeting

March 9-10, 1990

A Report

On March 9th and 10th, 1990 over 240 people representing groups from all over British Columbia came together to found an organization which unites government, business, labour, immigrants, women, natives, parents, senior citizens, colleges, libraries, school districts and, most particularly, students to promote literacy for all individuals in British Columbia.

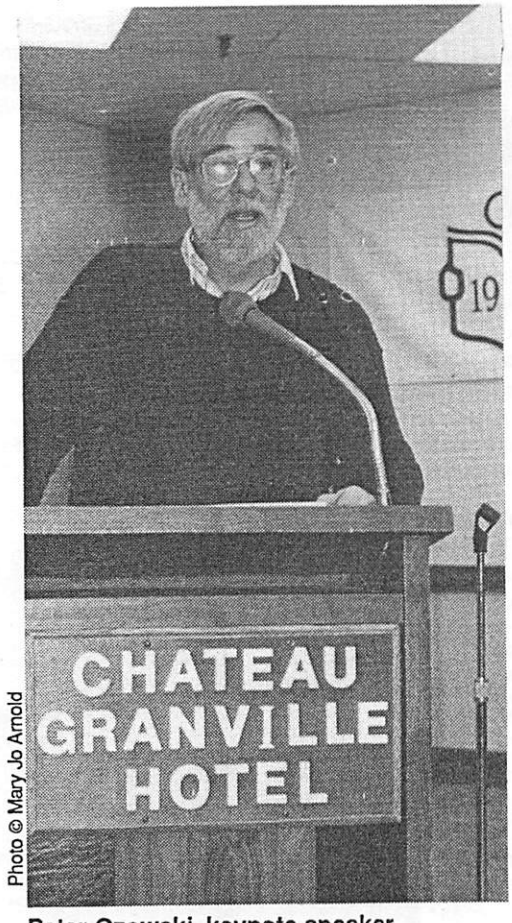

Photo © Mary Jo Arnold

Peter Gzowski, keynote speaker

Peter Gzowski, host of the CBC radio program "Morningside", in his keynote address to Literacy BC told the audience:

The wonderful news is that our cause has caught on. This is scary because while it is the hot issue and there is money for it now, causes are like waves breaking on the beach. Each wave breaks and passes, but the problems remain.

Today , we've got to solidify now while the wave's coming in. Once the media's attention has moved on to another cause, there will still be millions and millions of people who can't read. It's out of this place, the work of this time, that the energy has to be solidified and focused and carried on.

It's time to take risks now. Coalitions such as the one you're building today are risky. You will be dealing with guys in suits and people with institutional egos, people who will be trying to make sure his or her organization gets a bigger piece of the pie. You have got to learn how to deal with this.

The cause is not for those who shy away from politics. A friend once said,"Gzowski, there has never been such a political cause in the history of the world because literacy empowers people."

I see literacy underlying all the other issues because people who can't read don't get at the issues. We must get into hard core political work. Motherhood speeches have to be changed and sharpened. We have to look at political issues such as the GST and ask, "How does this affect literacy?" To get the GST rebate people will have to fill out a form. Those most in need of the rebate will be least able to fill out the form.

This is the most exciting time in the movement's history. It's time to refresh and renew and take advantage of the energy.

The Founding Meeting was funded by a grant from the National Literacy Secretariat, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

Photo © Mary Jo Arnold

WHO CAME?

Over 90 of the 248 people who came were from outside Vancouver, lower mainland or Victoria. They came from as far north as Ft. Nelson, as far west as the Queen Charlottes, and from as far east as Fernie.

One out of every eight of the participants was an adult who is or was at one time functionally illiterate. Native groups, libraries, colleges, school districts, women's centres, universities, prisons, community based programs, branches of the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, business and labour were all represented.

Mayor Gordon Campbell of Vancouver welcomed everyone to the city and expressed his interest in the organizaton, offering to get personally involved in the work of Literacy BC.

WHAT ARE WE ALL ABOUT?

Members of Project Literacy BC, centered in the lower mainland, and the other six Project Literacy groups in the province decided in the fall of 1989 to form an independent society with representatives from each region of the province and as many interest groups as possible. The Interim Board, made up of representatives of the seven existing Project Literacy groups, chose the name Literacy BC and wrote a constitution. The following mission statement is the most important part of the organization's constitution:

The purpose of Literacy BC will be to promote literacy for all individuals and groups throughout British Columbia

1) by fostering and developing cooperative partnerships in literacy.
2) by promoting the development and implementation of access to literacy programs.
3) by initiating, establishing, and maintaining liaison with all levels of government.
4) by initiating, establishing, and maintaining provincial communication among learners, tutors, instructors, and other individuals and organizations.
5) by assisting in the development of literacy activities.
6) by encouraging leadership and involvement of students in all literacy activities.
7) by promoting public awareness of literacy issues.
8) by encouraging research and evaluation in all aspects of literacy.

(from the Constitution of Literacy BC, 1989)

A Chance to Learn from Each Other

Most of those who came to the Founding Meeting came from local or provincial groups around the province which have been active in literacy. During a sharing session and in a display room these groups shared information about what they were doing. Below are a list of some of the groups that brought information to share:

Project Literacy Greater Vancouver
Project Literacy Nanaimo
Project Literacy Kitimat
Project Literacy Prince George
Project Literacy West Kootenays
Project Literacy Surrey
Movement for Canadian Literacy
Ontario Literacy Coalition
Correctional Education Association
Ministry of Higher Education,Training, & Technology
Project Literacy Victoria
Project Literacy Parksville
Project Literacy Prince Rupert
Project Literacy Williams Lake
Fraser Valley E. Literacy Ass'n.
Project Literacy Sunshine Coast
Secretary of State
Partnerships at Work
Knowledge Network
ALLOW
Project Literacy Terrace
Project Literacy Ft. St. John
Project Literacy Kelowna
Project Literacy Abbotsford/Matsqui
Adult Literacy Contact Centre
National Literacy Secretariat
Vancouver Public Library
Open Learning

Photo © Mary Jo Arnold

Students from Project Literacy Abbotsford/Matsqui presented the play, ***Marks on Papers.***

Norma Kidd, who helped get Project Literacy BC started in 1986, was honoured for her work in literacy in British Columbia.

Photo © Mary Jo Arnold

LITERACY BC BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 1990-91

Over 40 people ran for the board. Of the 25 elected members 6 are students. 15 are regional representatiaves for the college region listed after their names, 1 is from the Adult Basic Education Association of BC, and 9 are members at large (MAL).

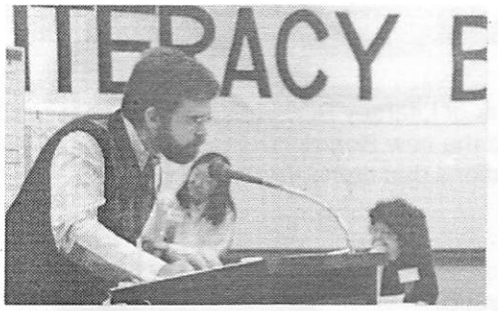

Photo © Elizabeth Murdoch

Ann Burger -MAL
Project Literacy Greater Van.
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431-0194

Ranjit Diwana -Fraser Valley
Matsqui-Abbotsford Com. Ser.
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Abbotsford V2S 3S9
859-7681

Keith Gray -MAL
Business Council of B.C.
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684-3384

Wayne Kingston -Malaspina
ALLOW
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722-2008

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North Shore Cont. Ed.
2132 Hamilton
North Vancouver V7P 2M3
986-8888

Larry Merrill -North West
Interconnect
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Terrace V8G 1S8
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Linda Mitchell -Camosun
READ Society
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Victoria V8V 4G7
388-7225

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Michael Booker- MAL
Learners Helping Learners
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856-8975

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Literacy BC
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642-3671

Murry Krause -New Caledonia
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John Boraas- Northern Lights
Northern Lights College
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Chetwynd V0C 1J0
788-2248

Debby Demare -Cariboo
Williams Lake Project Literacy
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William Lake V2G 2J3
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Sally Gellard -Vancouver
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Larry Loyie -MAL
Carnegie Centre
Suite 304, 1339 Graveley St.
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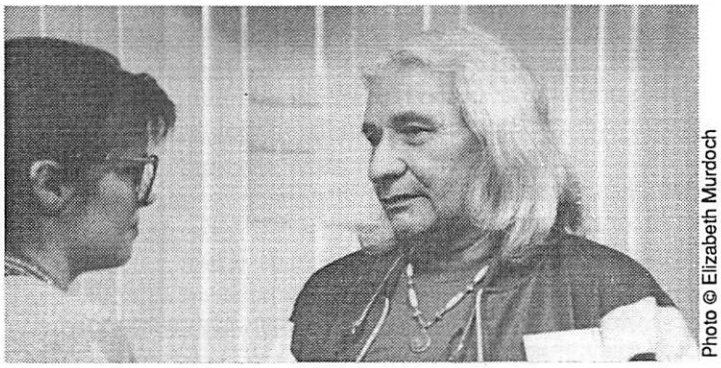
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Ron Shortt -MAL
Native Ed. Centre
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Wendy Watson -ABEABC
Fraser Valley College
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Lee Weinstein -Kwantlen
Invergarry
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Surrey V3R 2B4
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Ken Reich -Okanagan
BC Hydro
1429 Alta Vista Rd.
Kelowna V1Y 6K9
861-8002

Sharon Stroeder -MAL
North Coast Tribal Council
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Prince Rupert V8J 1P9
627-8822

Judy Wearmouth -Selkirk
Castlegar Library
1005-3rd Street
Castlegar V1N 2A2
365-7765

Mae Williams -E. Kootenay
BC Library Trustees Ass'n
Box 147
Fernie V0B 1M0
423-7591

THE WORKING SESSIONS

Those who came to the Founding Meeting were asked to begin the work of Literacy BC by discussing the issues that the Interim Board had identified as key and making recommendations to the new Board. The participants divided into groups and took part in 5 working sessions. Below are the recommendations that came from the 5 groups:

STUDENT PARTICIPATION - led by Don McPherson

- Learners should have a very strong voice in Literacy BC.
- Seeing student leaders helps take the fear out of getting involved in the group.
- Students have valuable skills to offer Literacy BC. Invite students to do what they do well such as talking to people about literacy.
- More learner input is needed on the Adult Literacy Contact Centre Committee
- Literacy BC should push for literacy education in the work place and more support for education from business and government.
- Literacy, just as poverty, is political.
- Information about literacy should be easy to access. Our reports should be in clear English and we should use radio and TV get out our message.

STRATEGIC PLANNING - led by Margaret Birrell

- Literacy BC needs to decide what it means by the words "literacy" and "grassroot".
- Members need to be made to feel part of Literacy BC.
- Literacy BC needs to let people know why it exists and who is included.
- The new board should have a 5-year planning workshop.

TUTOR TRAINING SUPPORT - led by Audrey Thomas

Literacy BC should

- Make a list of "lead" tutor trainers who can work with new tutor trainers.
- Build a support system for trainers and coordinators which might include a newsletter, a hotline, a resource centre and a networking system.
- Discuss what makes a good volunteer tutor program. For example, what is a good training program and what is an good size for a tutor program?
- Work for adequate and stable funding for volunteer tutor programs.
- Set up immediately a committee to work on the above needs.

BUILDING NETWORKS -led by Richard Darville

Literacy BC should strengthen regional networks that will

- gather and distribute information about literacy activities
- influence (planned) college literacy advisory committees regarding funding decisions, either by taking the initiative in forming these committees, or by taking an advocacy role in relationship to them.

Literacy BC should assist regional networks by

- developing a model for the relationship between regional networks, local groups and college structures.
- examining the best way to gather and distribute information about local and regional activities.

Literacy BC should develop solidarity within a broadbased provincial movement to advocate for literacy.

BUILDING COMMUNITY-BASED LITERACY GROUPS - led by Doug McCall

This working session differed from the other 5. The goal of this session was to review a draft report that was written to help local literacy groups get organized. The working session talked about the steps a groups should take to get organized.

Literacy groups must decide

Who are we?
Who are we trying to attract and how can we attract them?.
What resources do we have and need?
What does the opposition think and how can we make strong arguments for our position?

A literacy group should take time for review and reflection and build solidarity, commitment, vision.

EXTRA COPIES OF THIS REPORT CAN BE OBTAINED BY WRITING TO

LITERACY B. C. #1128-510 West Hastings Street, Vancouver B. C. V6B 1L8